

Amendment to the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (currently amended). An e-mail system for use by a plurality of passengers in a vehicle to exchange messages with a second server located external to the vehicle and associated with a data network, each passenger having access to a terminal, the e-mail system comprising:

a first server located on said vehicle, wherein said first server is configured to transport e-mail between said first server and said terminal;

a second server external to said vehicle, wherein said second server is configured to transport e-mail between said second server and a data network; and

a communications system configured to combine e-mail from the plurality of passengers into a storage queue and to transfer e-mail in the storage queue operate across a plurality of wireless connections to thereby wirelessly transfer e-mail between said first server and said second server while the vehicle is in motion, wherein the plurality of wireless connections comprises a satellite connection and a radio-based connection each having at least one of a plurality of transfer modes for transferring email between the first server and the second server, and wherein the communications system is further configured to combine e-mail from the plurality of passengers into a storage queue and to transfer e-mail in the storage queue using each of the plurality of transfer modes an immediate mode having a first cost associated with an allocated block of data and a batch transfer mode having a second cost that is lower than the first cost, and wherein the communications system is further configured to transfer messages having a high priority with the immediate mode, and to transfer messages having a lower priority with the immediate mode if excess bandwidth exists in the allocated block of data acquired for high priority messages, and to otherwise transfer messages having a lower priority with the batch

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transfer mode to thereby minimize the overall cost of operating the e-mail communications system.

Claim 2 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein: said communications system is configured to deliver an e-mail offer to said terminal; and said communications system is configured to selectively transfer e-mail messages to said first server based upon requests from one of said passengers in response to said e-mail offer.

Claim 3 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said e-mail offer comprises a subject header identifying an e-mail available for upload, an indication of who sent said e-mail, and a price for delivering said e-mail to said terminal.

Claim 4 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein: said terminal is a laptop computer configured with information identifying a home e-mail server; said communications system is further configured to route e-mail to and from said laptop computer through said first server regardless of said laptop computer configuration; and said first server emulates said home e-mail server.

Claim 5 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein said second server is configured to periodically poll said home e-mail server for inbox messages.

Claim 6 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein said second server is configured to receive e-mail forwarded from said home e-mail server.

Claim 7 (original). The e-mail system of claim 4 wherein: said communications system is configured to deliver an e-mail offer to said terminal; and said communications system is configured to selectively transfer e-mail messages to said first server based upon requests from said passenger in response to said e-mail offer.

Claims 8-9 (cancelled).

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Claim 10 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein:

said communications system is further configured to select one of a plurality of wireless communication modes based on mode selection criteria.

Claim 11 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises an increase in data throughput.

Claim 12 (cancelled).

Claim 13 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises a transmission cost associated with said wireless communication mode.

Claim 14 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises an amount a user is willing to pay.

Claim 15 (original). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said mode selection criteria comprises a time since a last transfer of data.

Claims 16-20 (cancelled).

Claim 21 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said communication system is configured to transfer compressed data.

Claim 22 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 10 wherein said communication system is configured to transfer encrypted data.

Claim 23 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 further comprising a vehicle data network configured to transport an e-mail message between said terminal and said first server.

Claim 24 (original). The e-mail system of claim 23 where in said vehicle data network comprises a world wide web server.

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Claim 25 (original). The e-mail system of claim 23 where in said vehicle data network comprises an e-mail server emulating an e-mail server identified by said passenger.

Claim 26 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via a modem interface unit.

Claim 27 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via an in-flight entertainment system.

Claim 28 (original). The e-mail system of claim 1 wherein said terminal communicates with said first server via a wireless interface unit.

Claim 29 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a kiosk.

Claim 30 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a laptop computer.

Claim 31 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a keyboard.

Claim 32 (previously presented). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said terminal comprises a personal digital assistant.

Claim 33 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said second server is further configured to provide e-mail accounts for said users.

Claim 34 (original). The e-mail system of claim 2 wherein said vehicle is an airplane.

Claim 35 (currently amended). A method of transporting a plurality of e-mail messages between a server on a data network and a plurality of terminals on a vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

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receiving each of the plurality of messages from the plurality of terminals in a storage queue on said vehicle; determining a priority of each of the plurality of messages; selecting a wireless transmission mode for each of the plurality of messages from a batch mode having a first cost and an intermediate mode having a second cost for an allocated block of data that is greater than the first cost, wherein the wireless transmission mode is selected to be the immediate mode if the message is an urgent message or if excess bandwidth exists in the allocated block of data, and otherwise selecting the ~~wireless transmission mode for the message between the batch mode and the intermediate mode in a manner that minimizes to thereby minimize~~ the overall cost of transporting the plurality of messages stored in the storage queue; and

transporting each of the plurality of messages between said storage queue and said server using each of the selected transmission modes to thereby minimize the overall cost of transporting the plurality of messages stored in the storage queue.

Claims 36-38 (cancelled).

Claim 39 (previously presented). The method of claim 35 wherein said selecting step further comprises determining the selected one of the plurality of communications modes based upon mode selection criteria.

Claim 40 (previously presented). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection mode criteria comprises increasing data throughput.

Claim 41 (cancelled).

Claim 42 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is an amount of data accumulated in the queue.

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Claim 43 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is a cost of said wireless communication mode.

Claim 44 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is an amount said user is willing to pay.

Claim 45 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said selection criteria is a time since last communication.

Claim 46 (original). The method of claim 39 wherein said establishing step further comprises the step of determining when to initiate said communication mode.

Claim 47 (cancelled).

Claim 48 (previously presented). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting e-mail between said second server and a data network further comprises an e-mail retrieval step wherein an e-mail message is transmitted to said second server.

Claim 49 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said e-mail retrieval step further comprises the step of polling a home e-mail server by said second server and retrieving said e-mail message from said home e-mail service.

Claim 50 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said e-mail retrieval step further comprises said second server receiving e-mail forwarded from a home e-mail server.

Claim 51 (original). The method of claim 48 further comprising the step of establishing an e-mail account for said user.

Claim 52 (original). The method of claim 51 further comprising the step of receiving an e-mail message sent to said e-mail account.

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Claim 53 (original). The method of claim 48 wherein said step of transporting e-mail between said second server and said first server further comprises: the step of providing an e-mail offer to said terminal; the step of receiving a request to upload a selected e-mail message; and the step of providing said requested e-mail message to said terminal.

Claim 54 (original). The method of claim 53 wherein said step of providing said e-mail offer further comprises the step of providing a subject header identifying an e-mail available for upload, an indication of who sent said e-mail, and a price for delivering said e-mail to said terminal.

Claim 55-57 (cancelled).

Claim 58 (previously presented). The method of claim 39 wherein said message is compressed.

Claim 59 (previously presented). The method of claim 39 wherein said message is encrypted.

Claim 60 (original). The method of claim 35 further comprising the steps of:
said first server receiving information identifying a home e-mail server from said terminal, wherein said terminal is a laptop computer;
directing said laptop to said first server regardless of said identifying information;
and
said first server emulating said home e-mail server.

Claim 61 (original). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting a message between said terminal and said first server further comprises transporting said message via a vehicle data network comprising a world wide web server.

Claim 62 (original). The method of claim 35 wherein said step of transporting a message between said terminal and said first server further comprises transporting said message

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via a vehicle data network comprising an e-mail server emulating an e-mail server identified by said terminal.

Claim 63 (original). The method of claim 35 further comprising the step of communicating between said terminal and said first server via at least one of the following: a modem interface unit, an in-flight entertainment system, a wireless interface unit; and a kiosk.

Claim 64 (original). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 39.

Claim 65 (original). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 53.

Claim 66 (previously presented). A digital storage medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon, wherein said computer-executable instructions are operable to execute the method of claim 35.

Claims 67-68 (cancelled).

Claim 69 (currently amended). A method of minimizing the overall cost of transferring a plurality of messages between an airborne server and a terrestrial server, the method comprising the steps of:

combining at least a portion of the plurality of messages from a plurality of customers into a storage queue;
selecting one of a plurality of operating modes for transferring each of the plurality of messages in the storage queue based at least in part upon a priority of the message, wherein the plurality of operating modes comprise an immediate mode having a first cost associated with an allocated block of data and a batch transfer mode having a second cost that is lower than

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the first cost, wherein the selecting step comprises assigning messages having a high priority to the immediate mode and assigning lower priority messages to the immediate mode if excess bandwidth exists in the allocated block of data, and otherwise assigning lower priority messages to the batch transfer mode; and
transferring the messages in the queue using each of the plurality of operating modes in a manner that minimizes the overall cost of transferring the plurality of messages in the storage queue.

Claim 70 (original). The method of claim 69 further comprising the step of charging a fee to the user for transferring the email message, wherein the fee for using the immediate mode is greater than the fee for using the batch mode.

Claim 71 (original). The method of claim 69 wherein the selecting step further comprises considering user criteria in selecting the one of the plurality of operating modes.

Claim 72 (cancelled).

Claim 73 (original). The method of claim 71 wherein the user criteria comprises a cost of sending the message.

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